One ORIGINS AND CONQUESTS

Africa, the Mediterranean Basin, Arabia

The purpose of this chapter and the following one is to give a succinct overview of the history of North Africa from antiquity to independence, with an emphasis on its Berber components, particularly in the territories that constitute modern-day Algeria and Morocco. This is not a Berberist reading, per se, although such a reading can hardly be ignored either. In any case, the intent is to dispassionately present the main developments of Maghribi history from the mists of time to the end of modern colonialism—political, social, cultural, religious, and legal—from the angle of the Berber-speaking populations, and their interactions with other social and political groupings and forces. Guiding this brief overview is the notion that the numerous manifestations of being Berber, including the existence of various forms of a single language, social organization, territorial cores, and daily praxis, were durable enough to enable the inclusion of Berbers within the broad category of premodern *ethnies* expounded by Anthony Smith.[1] This Berber-centered account confirms Miroslav Hroch's stipulation that the nation-formation process "is a distinctively older phenomenon than the modern nation and nationalism." From this perspective, Hroch's insistence that any interpretation of modern national identity cannot ignore the peculiarities of premodern national development, or degrade it to the level of a mere myth, resonates loudly.[2] Ironically, the Berbers rate nary a mention by Smith himself, apart from a map of the Mediterranean world between 200 BC and AD 400 in one of his books, which denotes the territory of Numidia (encompassing portions of modern-day Algeria and Tunisia).[3] In any event, most ethnic identities are like that of the Berbers: "nuanced, mutable, their boundaries and characteristics changing with time."[4]

HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS: A POTPOURRI OF NAMES AND NOTIONS

Even with regard to proper names, one is immediately confronted by a bewildering potpourri: Garamantes, Gaetulians, and Maures in the early Greek and Roman chronicles; Baranis and Butr, two overarching categories mentioned by Arab chroniclers supposedly differentiating those who wore the *burnus* (a one-piece hooded cloak) and those who wore the *abtar* (a brief tunic, cut short), and which were said to provide most of the recruits to the conquering Arab forces, while some of the Baranis were said to be Christians, and thus liable to the poll tax;[5] and the subsequent division of Berber tribes into the Sanhaja and Zenata, supposedly according to linguistic criteria, notwithstanding each group's lack of geographic contiguity and other apparent common attributes. Within this division are other familiar, albeit long-since-vanished names of various groups—the Kutama of what today is northeastern Algeria, which provided the initial backbone for the Fatimid revolution that swept into Egypt from the west in the latter part of the tenth century, founding their new capital, al-Qahira (Cairo), in 969; the Lamtuna (*al-mulaththamun;* "veiled ones"), one of the great Sanhaja Berber nomadic tribes dominating trans-Sahara trade that underpinned the Almoravid (*al-murabitun*) empire (1053–1147); and the Masmuda Berbers of the Middle Atlas Mountains, from whose ranks came the founders of the Almohad (*al-muwahiddun*) Dynasty (1121–1269), which at its peak dominated all of North Africa and Andalusia, the western Islamic world.

Both Muslim chroniclers and French colonial-era scholars were keen on determining the origins of the Berbers: the Muslims so as to legitimize and ensure the Berbers' Islamization and Arabization and thus integrate them into the larger Islamic *umma,* and the French, in order to best serve the colonial project (each of these efforts is discussed below). In fact, contrary to these neat and politically driven versions of Berber origins, the Berbers' geographical and anthropological origins are themselves veiled: as far as can be determined, they are multiple, emanating from the Mediterranean, Nile Valley, and the Sahara, resulting in a composite population during Neolithic times.[6]

The gradual emergence in the Sahara during the second millennium BC of a lighter-skinned warrior aristocracy ascendant over black cultivators, a pattern that would repeat itself in more modern times in the Sahel region, is testified to by numerous Saharan sites of prehistoric cave art, the most famous being the Tassili n'Ajjer National Park in southeastern Alge-

ria, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The northern, Libyan equivalent of the Tassili groups ("Libu," in ancient Egyptian) came into increasing contact with Egypt through trade, migration, and conflict: invaders of the Nile Delta from the west, in 1220 BC and again in 1180 BC, reportedly suffered thousands of casualties.[7] Two hundred thirty-seven years later, in 943 BC, the Libyan-Egyptian interaction reached a peak, with the founding of the Pharaonic "Libyan Dynasties" by Sheshonk I, from the Libico-Berber Meshwesh tribe, who had wrested control of the state from the previous dynasts. They would rule Egypt for more than two hundred years, a point of considerable symbolic significance for modern-day Berber "memory workers" in line with Smith's stipulation that "the secret of identity is memory," requiring the salvaging and reappropriation of the ethnic past.[8] Like their counterparts in ethnonational movements elsewhere, Berber memory workers engage in a dialogue between the present and the past, as they seek to recover, fashion, and promote a collective memory that will help consolidate modern Berber identity.[9]

In this instance, the symbolic importance of the ascent of Sheshonk I cannot be overstated, for according to the Berberist understanding, it marked the moment of entry of the Amazigh people into recorded history. To that end, in 1968, the Paris-based Académie Berbère (see Chapter 3) chose to propagate a Berber calendar with the approximate year of Sheshonk's ascent as its starting point (950 BC). Accordingly, the dates of both the Gregorian and Berber calendars (but not the Muslim one!) are used on the masthead of the Rabat-based monthly *Le Monde Amazigh (al-Alam al-Amazighi/Amadal Amazigh).*

Fast-forwarding five hundred years, we find Herodotus referring to another of the Saharan Berber warrior groups, the Garamantes of the Fezzan region in the Libyan desert, who constitute "the first proto-historic peoples of the Maghrib whose settlement sites are known archaeologically."[10] Herodotus's interest in North Africa, however questionable his accuracy,[11] indicates the growing intertwining of the Mediterranean region, and the arrival of new forces on its southern littoral. Carthage was founded by Phoenicians from the city of Tyre, traditionally in 814 BC. By the fifth century BC, it had become the dominant commercial power of the central Mediterranean and would remain so until its destruction by Rome in the Punic wars, between 261 and 146 BC. Apart from the approximately one-hundred-year Vandal interlude, ending in AD 530, Roman/Byzantine rule of the North African littoral and points south lasted, albeit in an ever-shrinking area, until the Arab conquests in the late seventh century AD.

For the Berber populations, the political impact of these developments was extremely significant. They emulated Carthage's territorial consolidation by establishing larger entities of their own, in the territory west and south of that controlled by Carthage. Originally, the third-century-BC Greek historian Polybius dubbed all Africans not subject to Carthage as "Numidians"; the name acquired a specific geographical sense after the Roman occupation.[12] The Numidian kingdoms, known initially by the names of three main tribal groups, the Massyli, the Masaesyli, and the Mauri (from which derives the Roman region of "Mauretania," roughly corresponding to much of today's Morocco), became bound up with the Roman-Carthaginians wars, while emulating the pomp and accompanying modes of rule of the other Hellenized monarchies throughout the Mediterranean. These kingdoms were led by figures such as Syphax, Massinissa, Jugurtha, Juba I, and Juba II. Eventually, they fell by the wayside, incorporated in one form or another into Roman Africa, thus bringing an end to North Africa's, and the Berbers', first experience of internally generated social and political organization.[13] Much more than the Libyan Pharaoh Sheshonk, the stories of these kingdoms, and particularly the struggle of Jugurtha against Rome, have resonance for contemporary Berberists. Like other modern ethno-national/cultural movements, the Amazigh Culture Movement has been engaged in a "search for a usable past."[14] The Hellenistic kingdoms of North Africa provide sufficient "proof" that Berbers had agency in ancient history and were capable of large-scale organization and development. They also have resonance for some North African nationalist historians seeking to "decolonize" history, like Abdallah Laroui, who sought to combat colonialist historians' presentation of North African history as one that proved the inherent inability of "natives" to overcome their internal divisions and operate on a large scale. In that vein, Laroui posits the Jugurthine war against the Romans (112–105 BC) as "having the character of a national struggle."[15]

Such a classification is anachronistic. But there is certainly room to deconstruct the notion of the undifferentiated tribesman. Brett and Fentress stand together with Laroui's devastating critique of the "timeless Berber" thesis, which focuses on an allegedly inherently disunited and unstable Berber social structure. The Berber Numidian and Mauretanian kingdoms in the last three centuries before Christ, they declare, "were states in every sense of the word."[16] The last five centuries before Roman rule, they emphasize, demonstrated "the ability of the African populations to adapt to and exploit new situations," testified to by the development of states, urban

structures, and a written language. But they also note that it is unclear how these affected "the basic nuclei of society: the family, and the clan, or their beliefs." This cultural duality is very much central to Berber society throughout history and up till the present day.[17]

Language, of course, is almost always a central component of larger-scale group identities, whether one speaks of premodern *ethnies* or modern ones, creating "a density of . . . ties enabling a higher degree of social communication within the group than beyond it."[18] Sociolinguistics view language as a social phenomenon: it is "not merely a means of interpersonal communication and influence . . . a carrier of content," but actually is itself content, "a referent for loyalties and animosities, an indicator of social statuses and personal relationships, a marker . . . of societal goals and large-scale value-laden arenas of interaction that typify every speech community."[19] More recent scholarship emphasizes the need to understand how speech communities are constructed through processes of conflict, competition, exclusion, boundary-making, differentiation, and transgression. Sociolinguists are now increasingly interested in what Gal and Woolard term "the relationship between the process of the public construction of languages and the linguistic construction of publics . . . how different images of linguistic phenomena gain social credibility and political influence, both within the academic disciplines of language and in larger social fields; and the role of linguistic ideologies and practices in the making of political authority."[20] They differ in emphasis with Benedict Anderson's influential study of nationalism, which postulated that "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation."[21] Drawing on Jürgen Habermas's work on the public sphere, Gal and Woolard stress that "a public is not simply a collection of social structural features that result from a circumstance such as the introduction of print. Rather, it is in part an idea, a framing of such structures and practices that, while moveable, malleable, and borrowable, is hardly inevitable."[22] As shall be subsequently seen, these insights are useful for understanding the dynamics of the modern Amazigh identity movement, which places supreme value on the Berber language as the repository of Berber culture and history, and as an object that requires rescue, development, and elevated status.

Indeed, the very matter of Berber linguistic origins, as well as continuity, remains somewhat controversial.[23] Brett and Fentress suggest that the advent of the Neolithic in the lower Nile Valley and Delta area, be-

ginning around 4000 BC, led to a major rise in population density and consequent movement of peoples both northwest and east, carrying new techniques and a related language, known to us only as "Libyan." Given the "remarkable similarity" of Berber languages, Brett and Fentress suggest that their spread across North Africa was relatively uniform and over a relatively short period of time, with the decisive break between them and old Egyptian coming prior to the definitive drying out of the Sahara between 2500 and 2000 BC.[24] Interestingly, a recent study suggests that the break was not so definitive after all, pointing to Amazigh etymological roots of the language of Pharaonic Egypt.[25] In any event, according to Laroui, the Maghrib had achieved a linguistic and cultural unity prior to the arrival of the Phoenicians and Romans, accompanied by an economic duality—agriculturalists and pastoralists. Subsequent research postulates a more sympathetic vision of pastoralists in North Africa, pointing to increased social stratification and a more developed material culture.[26]

But the relationship between ancient Libyan and modern Berber is clearer to some scholars than others.[27] David Cherry, in his 1998 book *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa,* leans decisively toward Fergus Millar's earlier study, which seriously doubted the existence of a "coherent linguistic and social continuum" from the pre-Roman "Libyan" population to modern-day Berbers.[28] The local language outside of the towns and the upper classes in Roman Africa, according to Millar, was "a mere peasant *patois,*" based in large part on Punic, which was, according to Saint Augustine and newer documentary evidence (e.g., public inscriptions and private monuments, written in "neo-Punic"), "a common spoken language throughout the lifetime of Roman Africa."[29] Why Cherry leans to this view, even if it apparently fails to jibe with his statement that there is "no real evidence for the Punicization of Algerian society" apart from one area,[30] is not clear. And if the language of everyday discourse in the non-urbanized areas of Roman rule was "indigenous," and "mostly untouched by Roman practice,"[31] why would this not also have been the case during the early centuries of Punic rule?

A more satisfying explanation is that there was a continuum involving a mixing of Punic and Berber in certain areas and among certain societal groups, as part of larger social, political, and cultural dynamics then at work. "Tyrians" were said to be transformed into "Africans" during the final century and a half of Carthage's existence, thanks to the influence of native Libyans. In turn, the latter became, in Susan Raven's words, "the upholders of neo-Punic language and traditions during subsequent centuries."[32] According to Laroui's formulation, foreign pressure

> led to tripartism, first socio-political, then, after a process of consolidation, extending itself to every aspect of life: economic, cultural, linguistic, geographic. The first division was social: assimilated subject, nonassimilated subject, and free natives; later it became geographical (cities, country, desert), economic (commerce, agriculture, nomadism) and possibly linguistic (Latin, Punico-Berber, Berber).[33]

Clearly, then, Berbers were neither merely passive victims of imperial conquest by the ancient world's bearers of "modernity" and "globalization" nor staunch resisters of it. This depiction, employed by colonialist, Eurocentric, and anticolonialist historians alike, represents a crude stereotype of Punic and Roman North Africa. In particular, North Africa's urban areas, beginning with Carthage, appear to have been social, economic, and cultural entrepôts, bringing about partial fusions or syntheses among its population, along with varying degrees of military and cultural resistance.[34] Whether we call North Africa's native inhabitants Berbers, Punics, Numidians, or Africans, it is clear that under Rome, there were various degrees of co-optation and interaction, and that the vast bulk of the Roman population there, both civil and in the army, was of African origin.[35] The second century AD produced one peak: an "African" domination, in Latin, of the empire's intellectual life. Politically, too, the African impact was far-reaching: nearly one-third of the Roman Senate in the 180s was of African origin, and shortly after that, Septimius Severus, born in Leptis Magna, a Roman *colonia* in what subsequently came to be known as Tripolitania, became the first African-born emperor (AD 193–211). Septimius was a full member by birth of the Romanized North African elite, as his father, "a Punic," had been granted citizenship. Upon becoming emperor, he made Punic an official language of Leptis Magna.[36] In contrast, the famous orator, philosopher, and playwright Lucius Apuleius (c. AD 123/5–c. AD 180), who was born in Madaurus, a Roman colony in Numidia on the border with Gaetulia, now the town of Mdaourouch, Algeria, defined himself as "half-Numidian, half-Gaetulian."[37] For his part, the playwright Terence initially reached Rome in the second century as a slave, i.e., from the lower less-assimilated portions of the Berber population.[38] As with the Hellenized kings of earlier centuries, so too do the luminaries of Roman Africa serve as iconic figures for modern Amazigh memory workers, providing further tangible evidence of both Berber deep-rootedness and the Berbers' contribution to advanced civilization. This is crucial not only for the collective self-image of modern-day Berbers but also as a rebuttal to Arab-

Islamic views of the Berbers as having lived in a North African version of *jahiliyya* (the pre-Islamic "age of ignorance" in Arabia), whose redemption would be achieved by an enlightened "opening" (*fath*), i.e., the arrival of Islam.

Christianity arrived in Roman North Africa during the second and third centuries AD, brought by sailors and merchants from the east, and perhaps from Rome itself. By the mid-third century, it had become the dominant religion of the urban poor; by the end of the century, it had spread to the countryside as well, indicating a widespread discontent with the authorities. But just prior to Christianity being officially established as the state religion by the Edict of Milan in 313, the Catholic Church was itself challenged in North Africa by the Donatist schism, a challenge that lasted almost a century and became frequently intertwined with outbreaks of tribal unrest and rebellion. The Donatists are sometimes linked to the so-called rebellious Berber spirit, but this essentialist view should be discredited by now. As has always been the case throughout North African history, Berbers/Libyans/Punics/Africans could be found in all camps—martyrs, saints, bishops, leaders, rebels, etc. Indeed, on the "orthodox" flank one finds Saint Augustine, one of the Four Doctors of the Church, whose teachings have resonated throughout the ages among Christians. Saint Augustine's mother, Saint Monica, was Berber/Punic, giving birth to him in the provincial Roman city of Tagaste, now Souk Ahras in Algeria's northeast highlands, sixty miles from present-day Annaba. As Bishop of Hippo, he played a decisive role in the final suppression of the Donatist heresy. Overall, Laroui's caution regarding the Donatist schism is well taken: the long conflict "indicates the social importance religious problems had assumed, even if the causes of the conflict were elsewhere." As is so often the case, resistance to the established order was being expressed through the use of religious idioms and tools. The rural wing of the Donatist rebellion was clearly made up of Berbers, but there is not enough evidence to suggest that it was really Donatist. Moreover, "the chronology of Christianization, the socio-racial structure and finally the numerical evaluation of African Christianity remain beyond our reach."[39]

From its height in the second century, the reach of Roman rule began to contract. The Vandal interregnum (429–533) and subsequent reconquest, this time by Byzantium, did nothing to inhibit the weakening of central authority in the areas beyond the North African coast. North Africa during these years has commonly been understood as slipping back toward the pre-Roman pattern of fragmentation into tribal groupings, with an increasing degree of pastoral nomadism, and a decline in urban society,

although followers of Fernand Braudel have challenged this with their "anti-chaos theory," pointing to uninterrupted urban settlement and a permanent division of labor between the second and thirteenth centuries.[40] Colonial historians rediscovering this period looked askance upon North Africa's decline, attributed it at least in part to the Berbers' uncivilized recalcitrance, and defined France's role as to complete the task started by Rome. In response, Laroui accounted for the decline of civilization (i.e., of social, political, and cultural life under larger frameworks) in North Africa as being due to "blocked historical development," in which Maghribi society was characterized by "increasing social dispersion," stemming not from a stagnating tribal system but from "a dialectic response." Freedom from Rome's, and later the Church's, universality, he says, "became the name for a return to protohistory" (i.e., social dispersion, anchored in the tribal system).[41] One consequence is that the Berber language recovered substantially during the post-Vandal, Byzantine period.[42]

THE ARRIVAL OF ISLAM

The conquest of Byzantine North Africa by Arab armies bearing the banner of Islam resulted, over time, in the religio-cultural unification of the entire region, including the areas that had remained beyond the old Roman *limes*.[43] To a far lesser extent, it also resulted in the region's linguistic Arabization: classical Arabic gradually become the language of law and bureaucracy, while urban communities and some rural and pastoral groups eventually fashioned and adopted Maghribi dialects of Arabic that were influenced heavily by Berber. For North Africa's far-flung, variegated Berber tribal groupings, the impact of Islam's arrival in North Africa via Arab conquest can hardly be overstated. Over time, Islam would come to profoundly influence nearly every facet of their lives. If there was a semblance of collective memory of the pre-Islamic epochs among the Berber populations, it disappeared. Their myriad experiences over the next millennium would include: fierce resistance to, and subsequent oppression by, the victorious and sometimes scornful Arab conquerors; participation in the ranks of the conquerors as they swept across North Africa and into the Iberian peninsula; religio-political revolts and religious heresies; the creation of Berber Islamic states and empires ruling over vast swaths of territory; and finally, a renewed loss of centrality and eventual marginalization in the centuries preceding the imposition of European colonialism. The historian Ira Lapidus sums up the six-century-long formative period of

Islamic state formation in North Africa, the "Caliphal phase," as a period in which Islam served as the basis of political solidarity among factious Berber tribes. Religious authority, he says, was joined to revenues from commerce and the support of a segmented tribal society. Hence, the conquering Arab-Muslim elites supplied both the authority and the ideology for the first wave of Berber Muslim state formation.[44] Still, one must be careful not to allow the prioritizing of religious appeal to unduly diminish the tribal *asabiyya* of the core groups of political and religious contestation movements. Moreover, it seems fair to assume that there was at least an implicit ethnic appeal among wider strata of these various groups.

The term "Berber Islamic empires," while often employed in surveys of North African history,[45] still may seem strange to the uninitiated. Such a reaction derives from the cumulative impact of long-accepted readings of North African history following the rapid Arab conquest and the area's almost complete Islamization over the centuries. In this view, the Berbers were usually seen as having merged with their Arab-Islamic conquerors, and after a bit of initial unpleasantness, creating a cultural and social synthesis—a particular Maghribi-ness, so to speak. Subsequently, intensive interest in the Berbers by French colonial rulers produced a backlash against anything that smacked of Berber particularity, a reaction employed with considerable effect by the Algerian and Moroccan nationalist movements, respectively. Maghribi nationalists certainly had an interest in emphasizing what was common among their populations, in order to forge modern political communities to combat colonialism and attain independence. In the independence era, as Rosen wrote in the early 1970s, Berber-Arab differences at the everyday level in Moroccan towns and villages, while certainly present, were contingent upon a host of intermediating factors.[46] Thus, the anthropologist Abdallah Hammoudi, even while expressing understanding of the demands for cultural recognition by the modern Berber elite, could say that no one spoke of a Berber-Arab cleavage prior to the colonial era.[47]

However, the actual history of the Islamization of the Maghrib is far more complex than the traditionally accepted Arab-Islamic narrative would have it, and cannot be reduced to a few pat formulas. At the center of this complexity are the varied reactions by the Berber populations to the Arab invaders and subsequent processes of Islamization, a story that combines "circumstance, dialectic and tribal society."[48]

One important fact to be kept in mind is that, unlike previous conquests of North Africa, the Islamic one was made by a society that was itself tribally organized,[49] thus helping shape the nature of the encounter be-

tween invader and native. In addition, Arab conquerors came imbued with a universalist message and worldview that left no room for autonomous existence of the mostly nonmonotheistic Berber tribes, as they did not belong to *ahl al-kitab* (People of the Book) and thus could not receive protected *dhimmi* status. Their choices were stark: accept Islam, be enslaved, or submit to the sword. At the same time, religious praxis in North Africa from the beginning of the Common Era appears to have been highly syncretist, combining elements of Judaism, Christianity, and paganism, and marked by active proselytizing by both of the monotheistic faiths. Jewish and Christian communities existed in the coastal towns of what was Roman and Byzantine North Africa, and apparently in smaller numbers in the interior as well. The existence of "Judaized" (as distinct from "Jewish") tribes is considered to be a historical fact; similarly, one can't rule out Christianity's presence among the more pastoral populations. In this atmosphere, the message of Islam may have found a fertile soil in North Africa (as it did, in fact, in Arabia, in a not dissimilar atmosphere).

All of these factors appear to have been in operation during the first half-century of Arab expansion westward from Egypt, beginning in 647, with the launch of the first expedition by Caliph Uthman bin Affan, and the founding in 670 of the military garrison town of Qayrawan in what is today the interior of Tunisia, about 160 km south of Tunis. By 710, Muslim forces had reached Tangier (Tanja), adjacent to the Straits of Gibraltar, and in 711, the first expedition crossed over to Iberia, inaugurating a nearly eight-century epoch of Muslim Spain (al-Andalus/Andalusia). The historical accuracy of the details of the initial conquest of North Africa is clearly suspect, coming to us with a time lag of over a century, and from the perspective of the victor only, with didactic and literary purposes uppermost in the chroniclers' minds. At the center of the accepted narrative is the story of the mythical Kahina (lit., "female seer," or "priestess"), of the possibly Judaized Jrawa tribe in the Aures Mountains, who is said to have taken over the leadership of Berber tribal resistance to the Arab forces. It includes an account of the Kahina's initial successes and eventual defeat by Hassan bin al-Nuʿman al-Ghassani, sometime between 693 and 702, preceded by a scorched-earth policy that allegedly caused the Berber tribes to turn against her; her adoption of a captured Arab officer, Khalid, as her son; and her dispatch of him and her two other sons to the Arab side once she realized that all hope was lost. From initial presentations of the Kahina as the prototypical antihero, representing everything counter to Islamic values, subsequent accounts were rendered in a manner indicating a desire to reconcile Berber Muslims with their Arab conquerors. The absence of any

verifiable knowledge of her personal life, and even her real name (Dihya?), increased her mythological status, so much so that she is sometimes presented as the mother of another semimythological figure from this period, Tariq Ibn Ziyad, the commander of the mostly Berber Muslim forces who led the crossing of the Straits of Gibraltar and then disappeared from history, leaving only the rock that bears his (corrupted) name, Jabel Tariq. In the modern era, too, the Kahina has been adopted, in turn, by French colonialists, Arab nationalists, Jews and Zionists, feminists and Berberists.[50]

Regardless of the historical accuracy of the Kahina story, the dual response of fierce resistance and switching sides to join the winning camp appears to have been a not uncommon Berber reaction to the initial Arab conquest. The remnants of Byzantine rule in the coastal areas could not stand up to the tribal-religious energies unleashed by the conquerors and thus quickly succumbed. Latin-speak Christian communities would survive in North Africa in ever-decreasing urban pockets and in agricultural oases for a few hundred years, mostly in Tunisia, until disappearing entirely under the pressure of the Almohad conquests.

Nonetheless, the process of cultural symbiosis between Arab conqueror and Berber native had only just begun and was fraught with difficulties. Berber tribal units in Arab armies could only have client (*mawali*) status, linked to Arab tribes or prominent personalities, while the onerous *jizya* (head tax) and *kharaj* (land tax) were imposed on Berber populations, in contradiction to Islamic law, which dictates that these taxes are supposed to be imposed only on infidels. Moreover, the initial resistance and the circulation among the conquerors of alleged sayings of the Prophet characterizing the Berbers as a perfidious people served to justify even more extortionate demands by Arab governors, including levies of female slaves and unborn lambskins to Damascus, and slave recruits for the Muslim army. Isma'il bin Ubayd Allah, the enlightened governor of Ifriqiya between 718 and 720, briefly reversed this policy. However, after the death of the Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz, Isma'il was replaced by Yazid ibn Abi Musli, who among other acts of oppression had his name branded onto the forearms of his Berber guards. Yazid's act enraged his guardsmen, who rose and killed him. Twenty years later, Damascus revived its original demand for female slaves and lambskins, while the regional governor attempted to implement caliphal policy mandating the confiscation of one-fifth of conquered lands (*khums*). Hence, the stage was set for the first great Berber self-assertion in the Islamic milieu, the Kharijite revolt (739–742), which broke out in Tangier, led by Maysar al-Mathaghri. Concurrently, the newly established Muslim administration in al-Andalus was threatened by an up-

rising of Berbers in sympathy with their brothers across the straits, a clear expression of tribal and ethnic solidarity.[51]

The Kharijite revolt, the first of countless reform movements in Muslim history, had originated in Iraq in opposition to Umayyad material excess and lack of piety, preaching equality among the believers, and branding the Umayyads as apostates. Its appeal to newly Islamicized Berbers chafing under the Umayyads was natural, and the parallels with the Christian Donatist movement's actions hundreds of years earlier are considerable.

Given the fact that none of the various manifestations of Kharijism ultimately managed to triumph over what we now recognize as mainstream Sunni Islam, there has long been a tendency to consign the Kharijites to the category of a heretical movement. However, as Michael Brett reminds us, they did not stand in opposition to an established orthodox majority. Rather, "in the middle of the eighth century they were in competition for the right to represent the entire community."[52] Moreover, the various strands of the Kharijite movement in North Africa were further manifestations of the syncretist character of religious belief and praxis that predominated throughout the millennium.

As it happened, it was the Abbasids who overthrew the Umayyad caliphate and replaced it with their own, in Baghdad. Islamic North Africa, for its part, splintered into a number of more local dynasties. Many of the tribal groupings commonly classified as Zenata Berbers initially adopted the dogma and practices of the Ibadiyya, an offshoot of the Kharijites. The Banu Midrar Berbers, having fled south from Tangier following the failed revolt of 739–742, established the city-state of Sijilmassa in what is today southeastern Morocco. The Rustamid Ibadites, led by an imam of Persian origin, did the same in Tahart, 225 km southwest of today's Algiers. Together, these towns controlled the northern trans-Saharan trade routes. Neither of the communities survived in those locations past the tenth century, and Ibadi Berber Muslims are today relegated to small isolated communities in Mzab in Algeria (see Chapter 7), Jerba in Tunisia, and Jabal Nafusa and Zuwarrah in Libya (see Chapter 5).[53] From a very different angle, the founding sharifian Moroccan dynasty in Fez at the end of the eighth century, the Idrissids, owed its success to the embrace of the powerful Awraba tribal group, which one hundred years earlier had opposed the Arab conquests but had since adopted Sunni Islam.[54]

By contrast, Ifriqiya came under the control of the Aghlabids, a local Arab dynasty that had originated as military governors of the region, thus befitting the area of North Africa first conquered and settled by Arab Muslims. But in the beginning of the tenth century, the Kutama Berbers of the

western reach of Ifriqiya, in what is now northeastern Algeria, formed the backbone of a revolt against their rule. As had been true with the Zenata Berbers more than a century earlier, they expressed their opposition in Islamic terms, acknowledging a militant Isma'ili Shi'a as the divinely guided Mahdi ("Redeemer," presaging the End of Days according to widespread Muslim belief) and caliph. The resulting Fatimid dynasty ruled Ifriqiya throughout most of the century, beating back challenges of the Umayyads of al-Andalus and their allies, the local Fez-based Maghrawa Berber dynasty, and then moved into Egypt, where it went on to play a major role in Islamic history. The vacated area, encompassing parts of present-day Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, was left to the local Zirid dynasty, which belonged to the Talkata tribe, a sedentary part of the Sanhaja confederation. The Zirids cultivated the Sunni Maliki school of Islamic law (*madhhab*) and practices, unlike the Fatimids, and ultimately split with their former overlords, recognizing the spiritual leadership of the Abbasid caliphate.

As this cursory account shows, initial Berber reactions to the arrival of Islam, however varied, passed fairly rapidly from the stage of resistance among some of the tribal groupings to an overall adoption/adaptation mode. Subsequently, Berber dynasties great and small, underpinned by different combinations of tribal confederations, would arise within an overall Islamic milieu. But one, in particular, constituted a fundamentally different response to the general religious and political ferment of the time—the establishment of a counter-Islam, if you will, by an amalgamation known as the Barghwata,[55] whose various elements belonged to the Masmuda tribal confederation, and who came together under the banner of Salih Ibn Tarif (749–795) in Tamesna, the central coastal plain of today's Morocco.

The origins of the Barghwata kingdom were in the Kharijite revolt. Taking refuge from the caliph's troops in Tamesna, Ibn Tarif, one of the revolt leader's closest associates, is said to have proclaimed himself, around the year 744, the Prophet of God. Armed with a Berber Qur'an, composed of eighty sections (Suras), he attracted the Berber tribes of the region to his banner. Some people believe that his grandson, Yunis Ibn Ilias, may actually have been the driving force behind the proclamation of Ibn Tarif as the Mahdi of the Berbers and the composer of the new Qur'an, whose actual text has not survived. Doctrinally, the new religion contained a number of variations on Islamic praxis, and was strictly enforced, befitting its Kharijite origins. Ironically, this response, however heretical it may have been for orthodox Muslims, confirmed the power of the new faith that had arrived

from the East over the previous decades, even as it was appropriated and refashioned for local usage.

The Barghwata kingdom survived for more than three hundred years before disappearing at the hands of the Almoravids in the middle of the eleventh century. However, Morocco's official history of the period has studiously ignored it, owing to its heresy, and knowledge of its actual workings has always been considered scarce. But in recent years, scholars and Amazigh movement activists have taken a special interest in the Barghwata, encouraging the publication of a variety of studies and tracts. In their eyes, the Barghwata represent an authentic assertion of Berber identity like no other during the millennium of Islamic rule, a cultural reaction emanating from the desire for self-preservation.[56] Also mentioned in this vein is a similar, albeit even less-known, development among a portion of the Ghomara, a Masmuda Berber grouping, in the area of Tetouan in the north of today's Morocco, where in 925 Hamim al-Ghomari al-Motanabbi claimed to have received a revelation from God in the Berber language, portions of which were quoted by Ibn Khaldun some four hundred years later.[57] Conversely, modern-day voices from Morocco's Islamist current, the chief competitor with the Amazigh movement insofar as they each offer a political-historical-cultural discourse countering that of the Moroccan state (see Chapter 6), have not hesitated to brand the Amazigh movement's activities and demands as "Barghwatism."[58]

Meanwhile, in al-Andalus, the myriad "Berber" aspects of developments—social, political, and cultural—both fascinate and raise questions. The vast majority of the Muslim conquerors in the eighth century were Berber tribesmen, a fact that usually gets lost when mentioning the high Islamic culture that subsequently emerged there. For example, a recent glowing account of the multicultural flourishing of Islamic Spain, in referring to the Berbers, focused only on the violence and destruction wrought on Madinat al-Zahra and Cordoba by newly arrived Berber tribesmen in 1009 and 1013 and the repressive and religiously intolerant Berber Islamic dynasties that followed from North Africa.[59] Neville Barbour essentially presents the same picture: for two centuries, he writes, Umayyad rulers were engaged in trying to fuse together the territory's myriad ethnic and religiously monotheist "races" into an Arabic-speaking state with a common sense of nationality. The process reached its peak under Caliph Abdurrahman III (d. 961), but was subsequently undermined by factionalism and the importation of new Berber troops who didn't belong to *ahl al-Andalus.* Some Arab sources characterized these cumulative processes

resulting in the destruction of the caliphate as largely due to the period of political and ethnic tensions known as *al-fitna al-barbariyya* (the word *fitna*—"sedition," "dissension"—has an extremely negative connotation in the political lexicon of Islam).[60]

Scholars generally agree that al-Andalus during the eighth and ninth centuries was characterized by a considerable degree of ethnic tension, involving the large number of Berber tribal units who conquered and then were settled on the land, mainly in the southern regions, followed by periodic fresh waves of troops brought in to bolster the rulers; a much smaller number of ethnic Arabs; the steadily growing number of converts from among the Hispano-Roman "native" population; and so-called Slavs, Christians imported from other parts of Europe who were then converted to Islam and also held a variety of functions.[61] But the nature and the underpinnings of this ethnic tension are less clear. Otto Zwartjes states that the discord between Berbers and Arabs that had accompanied the conquest of North Africa by Muslim forces had never disappeared, and the conflict between them was continued in al-Andalus, while he acknowledges that mutual migrations and political unity led to the exchange of many cultural phenomena between the two sides of the Straits.[62] David Wasserstein, by contrast, is firm in his belief that the "old" Berbers quickly abandoned their language and ethnic affiliation in favor of Arabic, finding no evidence for their survival in the administrative and religious institutions and cultural expressions of the new Islamic entity in the West.[63] Similarly, Peter C. Scales stresses the altered social-political reality in al-Andalus, which differed fundamentally from the nomadic, tribal way of life underpinned by Ibn Khaldunian *asabiyya,* suggesting that Berber ethnicity was being attenuated over time—i.e., "no *asabiyya,* no Berber." At bottom, says Wasserstein, these "old" Berbers assimilated into a larger Arab-Andalusian ethnic identity that by the eleventh century was fully formed.[64]

Nonetheless, even as they shed the components of their original identity and assimilated into a larger sociocultural entity over time, would it not be logical to assume that the Berbers themselves impacted substantially the development of Andalusi society and contributed to its makeup in one form or another? Moreover, if the language component of an ethnic Berber identity quickly disappeared, as Wasserstein insists, while ethnic tensions persisted, even among the "old" Berbers, then one must acknowledge the strength of other components of ethnicity—familial, economic, political, and perhaps even in the realm of collective memory.

Pierre Guichard is unhappy with the very notion of a rapid fusion of Arab and Berber elements within the indigenous Hispanic population,

pointing to clear evidence of the continuing strength of tribalism after the original invasions.[65] Scales, while acknowledging the strength of some of his arguments, emphasizes that the polarization that did exist was not tribal or racial in nature, but "party" (i.e., factional) and personal. The Berbers, he says, had ceased to exist in the eyes of the tenth-century Andalusi writers, who were focused on the urban components of society, leaving open the question of continued Berber tribal resilience in the rural areas.[66] Thomas Glick, for his part, uses archaeological tools to make points similar to what he calls Guichard's "toponym sleuthing."[67] Moreover, he expresses skepticism regarding the generally accepted notion that there were no purely Berber-speaking centers in al-Andalus by the tenth century.[68] Perhaps part of the answer to the conundrum lies in the probability that Berber language, being unwritten, survived at the lower levels of society, within the home and its immediate environs and among the lower classes in general, while upwardly mobile Berbers joined in more fully with the fusion process. Such a pattern is familiar to students of Berber history and culture from ancient times until the present. Indeed, Helena De Felipe makes this very point regarding the durability of Berber identity in frontier regions, noting the persistence of Berber personal names in genealogical charts. Our knowledge of al-Andalus's urban life from Arabic sources, she emphasizes, is far greater than what we know of the frontier, requiring further research.[69]

In any case, the survival of some type of collective identification among portions of Andalusian Berbers, for the better part of two hundred years, may have laid a fertile base for renewed ethnic tensions occasioned by the increasing import of "new" Zenata Berber cavalry contingents by the Cordoba caliphate to bolster its rule. Berber units would be brought from North Africa again in 1263 in order to defend Granada. The images of Berbers held by the Arab and Arabized military and administrative elite, as well as by mostly native converts of the lower socioeconomic strata, were overwhelmingly negative. The importing of "new" Berbers to bolster the caliphate created highly conflictual situations, particularly among the lower classes of Cordoba. But I would suggest that the heightened degree of anti-Berber expression was also drawing on older, durable themes (for the relationship between origin myths and ethnic tensions in Andalusia, see below).

Whereas the Barghwata and Ghomara provided localized spiritual-communal alternatives for their Berber populations, the rise of the Almoravids in the mid-eleventh century, followed by the Almohads, less than one hundred years later, had a profound impact throughout North Africa

and Andalusia. Their political achievements, the unification of North Africa and portions of Andalusia, were unprecedented. Architecturally, culturally, and intellectually, the mixing of North Africa and Andalusia produced great works. For our purposes, it should be noted that it was the first time in recorded history that the unifier of North Africa came not from the North or the East but from within the indigenous population—the Almoravids, a Sanhaja Berber dynasty from the Sahara Desert, and the Almohads, from the Middle Atlas Masmuda Berbers. Abd al-Mu'min, the successor to Ibn Tumart, the founder of the Almohad Dynasty, was the first non-Arab to appropriate the Qur'anic title of *amir al-mu'minin*.[70]

The third great Berber Islamic state, which arose on a portion of their ruins, was the Banu Marin (Marinid) Berber dynasty, a heterogeneous confederation of Zenata Berber tribes, which ruled from Fez and projected considerable power throughout the Maghrib and Andalusia between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Concurrently, the Hafsid dynasts would establish themselves in Ifriqiya, also proclaiming themselves as heirs to the Almohads. Moreover, for a brief moment amidst the cataclysmic conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, the scion of a Berber family from the High Atlas, Mohamed al-Mustansir, Hafsid sultan from 1250 to 1277, was the leading Muslim monarch, recognized as Caliph by the sharif governor of Mecca and Egyptian Mamlukes.[71]

It was especially thanks to these dynasties that Ibn Khaldun classified the Berbers as a "great nation." To be sure, none of the Berber Islamic states acted in the name of an overarching "Berber" identity, or even in the name of their own lineage. The Almohads' winning formula, says Lapidus, consisted of "a combination of a royal household, a hierarchical religious organization, a tribal military elite with Berber and Arab tribal allies, and a Spanish-type administration."[72]

It was from this point onward that the Berbers became more fully Islamized, which in turn gave impetus to the process of linguistic Arabization, particularly in sacred matters. But, as Maya Shatzmiller shows, this was no simple matter, involving, instead, complex dynamics of resistance, assertion, and acculturation. Correctly, in my view, she sees the Berbers in ethnic terms, notwithstanding all of their variations and nuances, both in terms of self-definition and the perception of others. Her emphasis is on the acceleration of the dynamics of Berber acculturation to and alienation from the Islamic state, in which Berber "resistance was expressed from within the mainstream of Maghrebi Islam." Yusuf ibn Tashfin, the founder of the Almoravid dynasty that inaugurated this new wave of Islamic piety and militancy, did not have a proper command of Arabic, according to

Arabic sources. The Friday *khutba* (mosque sermon) given by the Almohad Caliph Abd al-Mu'min was delivered in the Berber language, which was used in other public ceremonies as well. The Berber language was accordingly permitted for use in religious books, and imams and *khatibs* who could recite the *tawhid* (profession of faith in the Oneness of God) in Berber replaced existing Arabic-speaking functionaries in Fez.[73] Over time, however, the Fez religious establishment, being distant from the center of Almohad power in Marrakesh, resumed its role of making appointments from among its own members. But upon assuming power, the Marinid government reverted to the Almohad practice of "staffing Islamic institutions with Berber speakers, defending the legitimacy of the Berber language and legitimizing the Berber speaking population in a religious context."[74]

Nonetheless, this pattern would not last. As Islam became institutionalized and great centers of learning were established in Fez and other urban centers, accompanied by the continuous influx of Arab tribesmen from the East, Arabic was confirmed as North Africa's preeminent language for faith, commerce, and politics, although, as Brett says, the context in which Arabic evolved as a vernacular in these lands remains obscure.[75] Berber dialects, on the other hand, remained largely oral, and the preserve of local tribal and familial settings. As recounted by Brett and Fentress, Berber speakers in the lowlands and level uplands of the Maghrib were either absorbed into an Arab tribal structure speaking an Arabic dialect or almost entirely identified with the tribal peasant population and concentrated in more rugged and inaccessible regions, such as the Djurdjura to the east of Algiers.[76]

By the fifteenth century, the age of Berber Islamic dynasties was coming to an end. The political unity attained by the Almoravids and Almohads, and the achievements of the Marinids, who had aspired to re-create the empires of their predecessors, had faded away. They were replaced by more localized dynasties: the Nasrids in Granada, the Wattasids in Morocco, the Zayyanids (also known as Banu Abdul Wad) of Tlemcen, and the Hafsids in Ifriqiya,[77] accompanied by an increasing emphasis on sharifian origins by seekers of power in order to legitimize their claims. This trend, occurring in the context of institutional disintegration and decadence, Iberian pressure and intervention, and Sufist development and dissemination,[78] penetrated down to the local tribal level, as Berber tribes concocted fictitious genealogies to link themselves with the Prophet. Of course, these efforts were done for practical purposes, as establishing a sharifian connection was likely to have a tangible impact on the tribe's social, political, and material

well-being. But these genealogies also constituted the latest in a centuries-old intellectual effort to place Berber origins within an eastern Semitic–Arab/Islamic context.

Origin Myths

Central to Ibn Khaldun's classification of the Berbers was the provision of an eastern Arab origin myth. It was the outcome of hundreds of years of discussion regarding the subject. Shatzmiller lays out two chronological periods in the development of the myth of the Berbers' Arab origin, the first covering the ninth to the twelfth centuries AD, and the second the twelfth to the fifteenth. Within the first period, she says, there were several schools, "Eastern," "Andalusian," and "Ifriqiyan," which succeeded one after the other. Following the Islamic conquest of North Africa, Arab writers quite naturally sought to determine the Berbers' origins. One commonly expressed view was that they descended from Jalut (Goliath), whose followers had fled Canaan after being defeated by David. Another version traced the Berbers to the aftermath of the Biblical Flood story. Accordingly, their ancestor was Ham, the son of Noah, who was said to have been born in, or chased to, the Maghrib. In both cases, they were most likely drawing on older Roman, Greek, and Jewish traditions, which most likely were influenced by the immediately preceding and lengthy Punic period of North African history. Ibn Khaldun also repeated the legend of the Yemeni conqueror Ifriqish, who had left behind the ancestors of major Berber tribes such as the Kutama and Sanhaja, thus making them truly Arab in origin.[79]

Not surprisingly, as Shatzmiller shows, the polemics over Berber origins were bound up from the beginning with extant political issues. The numerous Berber revolts against ruling authorities prompted a wealth of forged *hadiths* lambasting them as perfidious enemies of the faithful. In response, others extolled them as the most pure and devoted of Muslims, even claiming that the Berbers sent a delegation to the Prophet Mohamed asking to be among the first to join the new community of believers.

Shatzmiller links the expansion and elaboration of these origin polemics to "*al-fitna al-barbariyya,*" the ethnic tensions in Andalusia in the tenth and eleventh centuries between Berbers, both "old" and "new," and Arabs.[80] The denial by Arab Andalusian genealogists during this period of the Berbers' (particularly Zenatas') Arab Eastern origin in favor of a Western, Iberian origin, she says, indicates the degree of animosity that existed, and their desire to block the sharing of political, economic, and social power by Ber-

ber groups, whom they accused of the sin of *shuʿubiyya*.[81] There is no little irony here: a local Iberian-origin narrative was tendered by a rival ethnic group in order to prevent the Berber community from sharing power in that very place, the opposite of modern-day anticolonial norms. Such was the power of Islam.

The Berber response, which was steadily elaborated over time, was an effort to "deconstruct and reconstruct the official history of their conversion,"[82] in an act of simultaneous resistance to their social status and accommodation to overarching Islamic norms. The resulting "Boasts of the Berbers" (Mafakhir al-Barbar) literature provided Ibn Khaldun with a source for his writings.[83] Ascribing Semitic and Arab origins to the Berbers served an important purpose: allowing the learned Muslim class to airbrush out of their collective memory the less benign aspects of the Arab-Muslim conquest of North Africa, and even promote a reconciliation based on the return of long-lost cousins to the fold. To be sure, these competing origin myths never percolated down to the masses of Berbers, as far as can be ascertained. But over time, their thoroughgoing Islamization left most Berbers with no awareness of their actual past. All that they were left with were tribal genealogies, which increasingly included fabricated sharifian lineages.

THE OTTOMAN PERIOD— RETREAT TO THE MARGINS

The Ottoman conquest of Cairo in 1517 from its Mamluke rulers inaugurated a four-hundred-year presence on the African continent and southern portion of the Mediterranean littoral. Two years later, without prior planning, Ottoman rule was formally extended westward along the North African littoral, the consequence of rising Spanish and Habsburg power in the Central Maghrib and their struggle with the Ottoman fleet for control of the western Mediterranean, and the concurrent weakening of the Tunis-based Hafsid sultanate and Tlemcen-based Abd al-Wadid dynasty. Central figures to the story were the brothers Barbarossa, Khayr al-Din and Aruj, Aegean Muslim privateers who had established a presence in the eastern Maghrib as early as 1504 and answered the pleas of the population of Algiers in 1516 to defend them against the looming Spanish threat. In need of backing, Khayr al-Din offered his services to the Ottoman sultan in 1519, who appointed him *beylerbey* (governor-general) of North Africa and dispatched contingents of janissary forces to the country.

To be sure, he would in 1520 temporarily be defeated by the religio-tribal leader of the Kuku tribe in Kabylie, acting in conjunction with the local Hafsid ruler. However, he would reconquer Algiers in 1525, and achieve the submission of the Kuku to Ottoman authority.[84] Over time, the Ottoman janissary units, known as the *ojaq,* would become the central ruling institution of a new administrative-territorial entity, Ottoman Algeria, whose greatest influence and independence would be achieved in the seventeenth century, thanks to agricultural wealth, a strong manufacturing sector, and corsairs that roved the Mediterranean and Atlantic waters. At its peak, as Phillip Naylor reminds us, Algiers would have over 100,000 inhabitants, and the regency would be sovereign in all but name, leading a nationalist Algerian historian writing in the 1960s to label it as an "Algerian Ottoman Republic."[85]

Moreover, the entry of Ottoman rule into the Central Maghrib laid important groundwork for the future modern-day territorial states of Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. The Ibn Khaldunian cycle of tribal-religious conquest and subsequent decline was broken, as Khayr al-Din's original *beylerbeylik* was divided into three provinces, or regencies, based in Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, respectively. By the eighteenth century, Tunis and Tripoli would be ruled by independent hereditary dynasties, still loyal to the sultan but increasingly intertwined with native elites. By contrast, the Algeria *ojaq,* headed by a *dey,* largely remained a caste apart, dependent on the continuous influx of new recruits from the Ottoman east, and ideologically committed to their Turkish identity and ties to Constantinople, even as the importance of the Algerian province to the Sublime Porte would decline over time.[86] For their part, Berberophones largely remained in their more peripheral mountainous villages or served as mercenaries or auxiliary troops for the *dey* or often powerful provincial *beys.*

Alone among North African entities, the Moroccan sultanate managed to remain outside of Ottoman suzerainty. Sharifian descent became the legitimating formula for dynastic rule, first under the Saʿadians, in the late sixteenth century, and then, beginning one hundred years later, under the Alaouis.[87] Like the Ottoman regencies to the east, Moroccan rulers ultimately established a durable, if sometimes tenuous, preeminence over the country's disparate and geographically fragmented social groupings.

Whether in the Ottoman domains or the Moroccan sultanate, Berber populations were increasingly consigned to the periphery of society, and the Berbers as a named group gradually faded from view. Ironically, their marginalization came as the notoriety of the "Barbary states," a name apparently derived from the Arabic word for Berber,[88] spread through-

out Europe, thanks to large-scale privateering by corsairs ("pirates," in the European discourse) against "infidel" shipping in the Mediterranean, carried out for both economic and religious reasons, and to the benefit of local rulers.

This does not mean, of course, that on the cultural level, Berbers ceased to contribute to the shaping of North African societies. As noted earlier, Hart pointed to the enduring, bedrock strata of Moroccan culture, particularly those themes connected to tribal forms of social organization, and identifies them as Berber. In the religious field, the Moroccan historian Mohamed el-Mansour suggests that we should see the importance of the Berber factor in the Maliki rites' adoption in and adaptation to the North African setting. The unchallenged supremacy in North Africa of the Maliki *madhhab,* unlike in other areas of the Muslim world, he postulates, derives directly from the fact that it best met the needs of Berber tribesmen. It was, he said, "formulated in a manner very similar to that of tribal customary law tables (*alwah*) found in every Berber village."[89] Moreover, given the fact that Maliki rites and jurisprudence are considered to be the most straightforward and least philosophical of the four Islamic schools of law, they could easily be transmitted in a simplified fashion, making them appropriate for illiterate Berber tribesmen who had difficulty mastering Arabic.[90] Paradoxically, a stress on the Berbers' lack of mastery of Arabic (with exceptions, of course) reinforces the notion of a deep-rooted Amazigh-speaking society up until modern times.[91]

The preeminent intellectual of the contemporary Moroccan Amazigh movement, Mohamed Chafik, rhetorically asks the same question that Mansour sought to answer, as he seeks to emphasize the Amazighité of North African Islam. Interested in the totality of Amazigh intellectual production as a tributary of Islamic culture, Chafik enumerates the numerous Amazigh Maliki scholars, while not forgetting to mention the Ibadi Kharijites as well. He also refers to a number of Imazighen who "left their indelible mark" on Islamic Sufi thought.[92] On the popular level, what is known as the *murabit* revolution in Morocco during the fifteenth century, the rise to prominence of religious orders centering on a purported holy man or miracle worker (*murabit*/shaykh/saint) and the resilience and continued deep-rootedness of Moroccan religious heteropraxis,[93] must also be understood in the context of enduring Berber culture synthesized with Islamic notions that provided more spiritual sustenance than Maliki legalism could offer.[94] Of course, memory is always selective, as much about forgetting as about remembering.[95] In this case, modern Amazigh memory workers interested in forging a usable past, and having a general preference

for a post-Islamic identity, refrain from referring to episodes and aspects of the Berber Islamic experience that cast it in a negative light—the religious fanaticism of the Almohads, for example, which resulted in massacres and forced conversions of Jews, Christians, heretics, and other purported enemies.

Politically, as well, Berber tribes were a permanent part of the landscape and could be found on both sides of the mythical and overly rigid *makhzen/siba* dichotomy (see Chapter 2), ranging, in fact, across the spectrum from unswerving support and alliance with the central authorities to isolation and autonomy from it. Of course, their own fractious intertribal conflicts, later enshrined by colonial administrators and scholars as part of an allegedly ineffable Berber character, were also very much part of the story, and affected tribal-regime dynamics as well. In any case, over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the gradual weakening of Ottoman power vis-à-vis Christian European states, and the declining economic importance of the Mediterranean sea-lanes in the face of the growing transatlantic trade, left the Ottoman North African regencies and the Moroccan Sharifian Empire alike increasingly stagnant, weak, and ripe for foreign domination. To be sure, the challenges posed by Christian European states had been felt as early as the fifteenth century, and the Ottoman arrival in North Africa was part of a larger maneuvering for power and influence throughout the Mediterranean region. But now, the balance of power that had been established in earlier centuries began to irreversibly fray. European power projection was increasingly felt, beginning with economic penetration, which would eventually culminate in full-blown occupation. The effect throughout North Africa, and on its Berber communities in particular, would be profound and transformative.